Cultural Studies should be... unsettled

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Several people have asked for the text of my 3-minute plenary talk at the CSA. Bruce Burgett, the CSA president, asked CSA members to contribute to the plenary by responding to this prompt:

- Cultural Studies should…
- Cultural Studies is…
- Cultural Studies could…

I approached this with my own idiosyncratic biography, anxieties, and hopes in mind. It is not meant to be taken seriously. I also wanted to approach it as a sort of Latour litany. Here is what I said:

- Cultural Studies should be unkempt, unsavory, disturbing.
- It should speak Spanish to French philosophers.
- It should quote Marx in board meetings.
- It should swear in polite company.
- It should wear muddy boots and drink whiskey in the art gallery.
- It should take pleasure in popular culture when others are critical, and it should critique pop culture when others get too comfortable.
- Cultural studies should not resign itself to adjunct positions, but it should instead agitate for benefits and full-time work for contingent faculty, as well as faculty unions and faculty governance.
- Cultural studies should never just say "Race, Class, and Gender" as if they were Hail Marys that absolve us of sin.
- It should not repeat things as if they were mantras. It should instead question how such repetitions arise.
- CS should infiltrate other fields, steal ideas from them, change them from within like double agents.
- CS should point out who's actually doing the work at the catered party. Hint: it's not the host.
- CS should theorize about the world as it can be, not just the world as it is.

- CS should read those theorists and authors who are declared "off limits" by other fields.
- CS should synthesize ideas that everyone knows are irreconcilable.
- CS should pirate everything it possibly can get away with.
- CS should give its knowledge away to anyone who wants it.
- CS should do interviews with journalists.
- CS should do interviews with Bill O'Reilly and tell him to shut up for once.
- CS should regularly declare where stuff comes from.
- CS should be a tour guide to where stuff is dumped.
- CS should keep secrets and be anonymous, and work behind the scenes.
- CS should make animated GIFs and wear day glow clothes.
- It should not limit itself to 140 characters.
- It should not have a Facebook profile or a Linkedin account.
- It should not go to conferences to network, but rather go to conferences to drop off socialist propaganda.
- It should go to socialist meetings and drop off libertarian propaganda.
- It should put political organizing on its CV.
- It shouldn't play so many video games.
- It should make video games.
- It should be methodologically anarchistic.
- It should study boring things and find beauty in them.
- It should study beautiful things and find terror in them.
- When Cultural Studies speaks, presidents should choose early retirement.
- Cultural studies should be: unsettled.